



Project TEACH & COVID-19

GUIDELINES RELATED TO MEDIA COVERAGE: COVID-19

Dr. Wanda Fremont, MD, is a Project TEACH Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Region 1

Because the media plays a major role in informing the public about COVID-19 and may be a causative agent in increasing anxiety and stress, it is critical for parents and families to have guidance about the use and misuse of media in during this time of crisis. Several studies have shown that the prevalence of stress – related symptoms was higher in children who spent more time watching coverage of the events on television or the Internet.

Parent, educators, health care providers, politicians, and journalists must increase their awareness about the potentially harmful effects of media exposure on children. Media exposure (television, radio, internet, messaging, and social media) by children should be closely monitored by parents.

- Children's exposure should be limited. Adults would also benefit from limiting their own exposure to reduce their stress reactions so that they and their children are better able to cope.
- The use of media should take into consideration a child's developmental level. Young children should not watch adult-oriented shows. Older elementary school-aged children may tolerate being exposed to news "briefs" in which simple concise statements of the facts are made (e.g., reports that occur on major networks between television shows) but may not be ready to watch news shows that spend 30 minutes with interviews, photos, and more detailed discussion of the effects of the pandemic.
- Parents and caregivers are advised to watch the coverage with their children when they watch television or the media. This supervision provides adults with the opportunity to observe children's signs of distress and be available to answer questions and discuss relevant topics.
- Constructive uses of the media should also be taken into consideration. The media may be helpful for parents by providing them access to valuable information to help them explain to their children the news and effects of the pandemic. Media reports can be used to help reassure children that many adults are working to maintain a safe and protected environment for them. Adults may choose to offer educational media information or specific types of media discussion that will help a child feel secure in the knowledge that adults are taking charge and responding in ways that are protective.

Project TEACH Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists are available through the Project TEACH warm lines to provide guidance on assessment of a children's and adolescents' mental health symptoms and evidence-based treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find additional resources on COVID-19 and its impact on children and families across NYS here

<https://projectteachny.org/covid/>